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# Theo-Political Conspiracy Discourse in *The Wanderer*

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## ABSTRACT

This study undertakes an intensive analysis of *The Wanderer*, an ultra-conservative Catholic weekly newspaper. It is argued that conspiracy discourse in *The Wanderer* provides a continuous series of "god" and "devil" terms that play off one another as "generic warrants"—authorizing a domino effect that solidifies an over-arching rhetorical vision, which ultimately affects the interpretation of U.S. Roman Catholic Church doctrine and its application to a number of contemporary socio-political issues. Discourse emanating from this particular publication is representative of a "paranoid style" and provides a case study for tracing operant terms in an ongoing "backlash movement."

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Political scientist Charles W. Dunn has recently argued "changes in American public policy are significantly influenced by theology."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Dunn sees increasing evidence of a new political epoch in which "a marriage of conservative theology with conservative economic, political, and social ideology . . . may be in the process of consummation."<sup>2</sup> He notes a variety of "grass-roots" movements presently invigorating the evangelical and fundamentalist right-wing. Issues such as abortion, school prayer, anti-homosexuality, anti-sex education, creationism, and tuition tax credits have dominated the political and theological agendas of the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's. A liberal-conservative split on such issues is mirrored by politicians and clergy alike. If Dunn's analysis is correct, theological tensions within the church reveal and inform political tensions outside the church.

This essay focuses on theo-political tensions within the Roman Catholic Church through intensive analysis of *The Wanderer*, an ultra-conservative Catholic weekly newspaper. *The Wanderer* presents rhetorical scholars with a unique opportunity to account for a perdurable feature of American right-wing extremist groups—the evolution of conspiracy theories and themes in theo-political discourse.

In interpreting *The Wanderer's* discourse, this evaluation draws upon conspiracy and political movement theory. The narratives are historically situated in the post-Vatican II Church. *The Wanderer* serves as a voice for a backlash movement against the changes experienced in the post-Vatican II U.S. Roman Catholic Church. Its major weapon is the rhetoric of conspiracy. It is argued that conspiracy discourse in *The Wanderer* provides a continuous series of dramatic "god" and "devil" terms that play off one another. If one accepts and is motivated by one of the terms, it is posited that one is also likely to accept the others offered in the series. This is based, in part, on the juxtaposition of the terms as documented in dramatic alignments found in the newspaper.

The major research question that frames this study is: How can we rhetorically

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account for the evolution, nature, situational constraints, and implications of theologically inspired right-wing conspiratorial discourse in the U.S. Catholic Church? Sub-questions include:

1. What are the common scenarios against which the drama takes place? What "isms" are reviled? What political-theological issues are prominent in the discourse?
2. Who are common heroes and villains appearing in the discourse?
3. What is the scenic environment of the implied and actual conspiracies? Who is involved? Where? Under what circumstances? Through what events? How is verification made?
4. How does the discourse prepare audiences for and specifically provide linkages to conspiratorial warrants?
5. What are the implications of this discourse?

Discourse is drawn from *The Wanderer* for the 1980 election year. The narratives are viewed as enactments of "moral dramas," which Kurt W. Ritter defines as "the acting out of a clash between good and evil. It is a confrontation that people come to perceive as a struggle between the 'god terms' and the 'devil terms' of their culture."<sup>3</sup>

### RHETORIC AND CONSPIRACY

Dan Nimmo and Richard E. Coombs argue the key source of the "mediated reality of conspiracy" is the "tendency...to create fantasies about the world 'out there' more or less shaped by members of the group." This process is quite complex. However, it is clear that "group members reinforce each other in a shared vision" arrived at "through an elaborate form of groupthink."<sup>4</sup> "Groupthink" produces an ideology responsible for a rhetorical vision that gives the socio-political world a charged emotional significance outweighing seemingly more rational arguments.

Conspiracy theory predicts the appearance of a bizarre composite rhetorical vision involving a display of "paranoid style." Bormann indicates that a rhetorical vision displaying a "paranoid style" is "so out of joint with common sense and everyday experience that ... [its] appeal is limited."<sup>5</sup> According to Hofstadter, people who exhibit the paranoid style display qualities of "heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy." Adherents envision a hostile "holistic world" where evil forces are lurking, intent on destroying "nation," "culture," or the present "way of life." Voicing selfless and patriotic religious and political motives, conspiracy narratives often reflect high moral indignation. This "style" centers more on the way beliefs and attitudes are communicated. Subversives are seen undermining, infiltrating, and destroying prized institutions. The enemy is "within."

Exponents are not content merely to see conspiracies or plots here and there in history, but rather, regard a "vast" or "gigantic" conspiracy as the motive force in historical events." History is conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power, and to defeat these forces one needs "an all-out crusade." Such a "crusade" is earmarked by apocalyptic rhetoric ("time is running out" or "God's judgment is upon us"), total lack of compromise, and a desire to see the enemy eliminated. This paranoid style exhibits "careful preparation for the big leap from the undesirable to the unbelievable." Amassing facts and drawing "conclusions" is not so much intended to convince or convert a hostile world as it is a defense mechanism to "protect" the person from having to face contradictory audiences and information.<sup>6</sup>



Besides the appearance of a "paranoid style," a theory for a rhetoric of conspiracy finds a "common thread" in five propositions. Conspiracy rhetoric: (1) portrays an imminent danger; (2) establishes a simple cause and solution for this danger; (3) identifies a conspiratorial villain or group; (4) verifies the existence of a conspiracy, and (5) wages war between good and evil. Engaged audiences would presumably respond favorably to themes, strategies and tactics associated with these precepts.

In portraying an imminent danger, Donovan Ochs distinguishes between legal and practical conspiracies. A conspiracy exists *legally* when an organized group takes concerted action with the intention of committing a crime. A conspiracy exists *practically* when people perceive an imminent danger to both self and society as posed by the concerted intentional action of some group.<sup>7</sup> For example, Barnet Baskerville has shown how evangelicals of the extreme right portray America in "imminent danger of being betrayed by a monstrous "Communist conspiracy." This danger is reified and, as often as not, begins with the identification of "dangerous" events and activities that create increased anxieties as patterns are identified and adherents feel increasingly manipulated and persecuted.<sup>9</sup> The threat is linked, in the United States, to real or imagined attacks on the presumed dominant American ideology usually associated with phrases like "our way of life" and/or extended to include the "nature of civilization" itself.<sup>10</sup> The formulation of a "foreign" and "hostile" ideology can unify and rally the forces.<sup>11</sup>

The discourse can arise from genuine social, religious, political, or economic strain.<sup>12</sup> This can be viewed in very personal terms—that is, it threatens me or my family, my friends and relatives, and all that I hold dear and sacred.<sup>13</sup> People fear change, feel themselves dispossessed, and are determined to repossess lost values, status, and power relationships.<sup>14</sup> Adherents feel America has been lulled into a false sense of security<sup>15</sup> and its "softness" is borne out of affluence and moral decay.<sup>16</sup> In establishing a simple causation and solution for this danger, right-wing extremist rhetors "simplify" their reasoning process so that a single cause can account for a host of problems. Events are difficult to understand until the conspiracy premise is introduced and the one solution is produced.<sup>17</sup>

In identifying conspiratorial villains or groups, the discourse portrays "enemies" engaged in planned, systematic, subversive activities.<sup>18</sup> The vast, fiendish plot is no mere happenstance; it is an evil design by unspeakable monsters.<sup>19</sup> The villains in the plot are portrayed as mysterious, secretive, arch-enemies who hatch their plans in dark places, behind closed doors, and for nefarious purposes. These heretics are portrayed as devious and blood-thirsty, if not Satanic. These "traitors" are powerful adversaries who will stop at nothing to realize their insidious schemes.<sup>20</sup> Great attention is paid to the verification of the existence of the conspiracy.<sup>21</sup> It becomes crucial to "uncover" secret plans and hideouts, and to use the testimony of "turncoats" and "renegades" as "proof."<sup>22</sup> Oftentimes the mere accusation of conspiracy is enough to "prove" it.<sup>23</sup>

Conspiracy rhetoric is often contextualized as a dire confrontation between the forces of good and the forces of evil.<sup>24</sup> One result of such a polarized view is that rhetors embark upon a "divinely sanctioned" crusade,<sup>25</sup> posing as modern-day messiahs who alone can turn back the raging tides of history, warning us of our evil ways before the final disaster overtakes us. This apocalyptic tone adheres to much of the discourse.<sup>26</sup> Theorists presume that participant-audiences are likely to derive some form of ego-enhancement as well as vent pent-up frustrations through engagement with conspiracy themes and texts.<sup>27</sup>

### *Common Scenarios*

*The Wanderer* offers its audience a host of problems in the post-Vatican II Church.

The newspaper's editors and reporters are engaged in a raging battle against various secular philosophies and influences that threaten their traditional view of Catholic values and religious orthodoxy. They write:

Our faith is a divinely revealed faith. It was entrusted to Our Lord to the Church founded upon Peter and the Apostles. It is the solemn duty of the Church to preserve this Deposit of Faith and to safeguard it from all defections and distortions of whatever source. In our age the attack on Catholic teachings is more diverse and widespread, because of the highly secularized society in which we live and the influence of modernism in many Catholic educational institutions.<sup>28</sup>

Secularism and modernism account for a host of evils posing a "serious threat to Catholic faith and morals."<sup>29</sup> Components include but are not limited to "defective catechetics" that are "tainted with modernist errors," sex education classes, situation ethics, secular humanism, the Equal Rights Amendment, and antipathies toward the pro-life movement.<sup>30</sup> A number of elements preclude theological, moral, and doctrinal orthodoxy. These include "syncretistic Christianity"<sup>31</sup> (a bastardized, watered-down form of Christianity) and "neo-modernism," defined as "that experience-centered religion of process theology which immanentizes God, denies the supernatural, naturalizes religious dogmas, and results in radical social ideals and community action being substitutes for fidelity to Christ's Church and Kingdom."<sup>32</sup> *The Wanderer* audiences are told that a "New Religion" and a "New Morality" are being "developed at the hands of . . . experts" that ignore "official documents of the Church."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, a "great doctrinal revolution and apostasy from the Faith is . . . the . . . major fact of life in the Catholic body today."<sup>34</sup> The only antidote to this widespread dissolution is fidelity to the Pope and the Magisterium of the Church.<sup>35</sup>

Appeals to orthodoxy and fidelity have led *The Wanderer* to isolate various "Church" issues best described as theo-political in nature. The primary area of concern centers on the "family"<sup>36</sup> and "family issues" such as abortion,<sup>37</sup> education,<sup>38</sup> and homosexuality.<sup>39</sup> Threats to the family are posed by a variety of sources including Communism/Marxism/Socialism,<sup>40</sup> secular humanism, and pluralism.<sup>41</sup> These influences are reflected in internal Church struggles over doctrine, theology, biblical interpretation, and even in liturgical disputes.<sup>42</sup>

Debate over "family" issues provides a framework for conspiracy rhetoric. Secular philosophies are depicted as dangerous both within the Church and without. Those "dangers" are simultaneously traced to their "roots" in the damned philosophies and posited as "the cause" of the chaos and moral turpitude in church and society. The solution is simple—one need only follow the Pope and the Magisterium. This is the antidote for "the merely popular and fashionable thought of the age."<sup>43</sup>

### *Heroes and Villains*

Audience appeals in *The Wanderer* are structured around conservative heroes who uphold the teachings of the Church. The chief protagonists are the Pope, orthodox Bishops, and those who teach "in-line" with the Magisterium. Those who support issues consonant with the approved belief structure are extolled. "Ordinary people" and the "faithful" are depicted as being under siege.

Enemies abound. In addition to singling out the "liberal" press and "far out" bishops,<sup>44</sup> *The Wanderer* also complains of the "modernist clique," "Catholic intelligentsia," and "proud triumvirate[s]" who try to "circumvent the Pope," as well as assorted "dissidents,"



and "perpetrators."<sup>45</sup> The authors excoriate "pluralists" and "secular humanists,"<sup>46</sup> "bleeding-heart liberals,"<sup>47</sup> "renegades" and "dissenters,"<sup>48</sup> as well as "experts" and "the new catechetical establishment" with its notions of "progressive education."<sup>49</sup> These "enemies" are described as "a handful of noisy radicals and misguided people."<sup>50</sup> Other named enemies include: "subversives,"<sup>51</sup> "priests in politics,"<sup>52</sup> "innocent dupes," "government bureaucrats," and "social planners."<sup>53</sup> The most hated enemies are the Marxists and the Communists whose "tyranny knows no bounds." They seek to implant "unspeakable regimes" through the imposition of "inhuman" power.<sup>54</sup>

For the villains to assume personas audiences can readily identify with, they must be personified—given real names and real activities. Villains are ensconced in "subversive" activities wherein complex plots are both created and executed. These blood-thirsty artisans of intrigue are portrayed as powerful architects of Satanic proportions. Such villains must be identified with an actual conspiracy scheme.

### *The Scenic Environment: Implied Conspiracy*

*The Wanderer* identified an actual conspiracy (or at least used the word "conspiracy" and attached it to actual reasons and events) only twice in the first six months of 1980.<sup>55</sup> Narratives from January through June, then, are best described as conspiratorial in "tone."

During the first six months of 1980, *The Wanderer* drew upon images of the powerful or the elite or both in control of events, but the actual use of the word "conspiracy" is missing from the discourse. The following three passages are suggestive of the conspiracy themes and images evoked:

[On the Subject of Women's Ordination]:

The orchestration of this conflict is being expertly handled in the press . . . This is true not only in the secular press, but also in that section of the Catholic press which is populated by renegades.<sup>56</sup>

[On the Subject of Catholic Education]

A review of the writings of these men [Catholic Educational theorists, Gabriel Moran, Michael Warren, and Fr. James Di Giacomo] reveals clearly and precisely why so many religious education programs have taken the direction they have [i.e., fallen apart]. Using four issues repeatedly raised during this controversy, one can easily identify the problem: the definition of catechesis; experimental approach vs. whole truth; Catholic identity; and memorization.<sup>57</sup>

[On the Communists as:]

This great Northern bear, this beady-eyed assassin of motherhood, this corrupter of childhood, this murderer of unborn infants . . . this blasphemer of all that is called divine . . . now crawls out of its blood-slimed hole in Moscow . . .<sup>58</sup>

[On the Family:]

The family is under siege by groups of social planners and professionals that confuse diversity with perversity; that proclaim polygamy,

homosexuality, murder of one's offspring, abandonment of one's parents, as alternative lifestyles which are all truly pervasions of the natural order [as set down by God].<sup>59</sup>

These three examples are verifications of existing theory on conspiracy rhetoric. They involve: the posing of problems created by "social planners," "professionals," and "renegades." The mere identification of the problems suggests simple solutions. The "enemy" is involved in the "orchestration" of an implied conspiracy that is being "expertly handled." These people are depicted as "corrupter[s]," "murder[ers]," and "blasphemers" who have managed to crawl out of their blood-slimed hole[s]. What is interesting is the number of "villains" and groups identified and the multiple forms of their merciless incursions on the family. At times they are mere dupes—powerless pathetics; at others, they are portrayed as omniscient, cunning, and powerful. If the enemy is too powerful, movement adherents might despair; if too weak, the movement may lose cohesion because it lacks a serious, identifiable and personified threat. It is the "movement" between this paradox that is part of what makes conspiracy rhetoric work—it is rich in ambiguity.

*The Wanderer* is not content to use name-calling and faceless ad nominem attacks. It has selected certain "targets" for censure. A favorite target group is the United States Catholic Conference (USCC)—the teaching "arm" of the United States Catholic Bishops. This conference has a number of committees and one often criticized is the USCC social action committee:

At a Bishops' meeting in November 1975, a very strong pro-life statement was presented by Cardinal Cooke and accepted by the bishops. Unfortunately, it lost most of its strength when the USCC social action committee appeared before the Democratic Platform Committee and presented a grocery list of issues . . . Pro-life thus became just one of many.<sup>60</sup>

Ire is also raised over "liberal" interpreters of biblical texts. *The Wanderer* also names the villains responsible: "Father [Raymond E.] Brown calls into question . . . the virgin birth of Christ, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption of Mary, and the origins of the Church."<sup>61</sup> Notre Dame and its president, Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, are also the focus of attacks on modern education: "[Notre Dame is] satisfied with a gossamer film called a Catholic presence as its 'identification with the church.'" Complaints regarding the university's "loyalty to the magisterium" are also raised.<sup>62</sup>

Much of the discourse is concerned with establishing alliances between groups as well as people. The USCC was accused of joining an "alliance which include[d] the nation's leading pro-abortion organizations." The group alluded to was Independent Sector, which also boasted the membership of Planned Parenthood, Zero Population Growth, and the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. Significantly, it was alleged that funding for Independent Sector was provided by the Rockefeller Foundation, long associated with the conspiratorial forces of the wealth elite. Other U.S. Catholic agencies identified as belonging to Independent Sector included the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the National Catholic Development Conference (a church-affiliated fund-raising agency), and the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities.<sup>63</sup>

While no actual conspiracy is charged, conspiratorial "alliances" are part of the scenic environment and identifiable villains are offered. For example, *The Wanderer* notes that "embarrassed and defensive responses from Catholic officials" who tried to explain membership in Independent Sector provide "further evidence that the manipulators, who



once again have compromised the Church, knew full well that Catholic association with this group would create a storm of controversy if publicized."<sup>64</sup> This associative strategy is representative of the threatening rhetorical world created in *The Wanderer* narratives.

A past event, the 1976 Detroit Call to Action conference, has been a continual "sore spot" for *The Wanderer*.<sup>65</sup> The "social action" people were said to be in "control" of this 1976 meeting and the platform/agenda was read as a threat to family values. History itself seems to be in the hands of such malevolence. What happened in 1976 can happen in 1980:

The insidious seeds of secularism, hedonism, and dissent sown by the militant majority at the infamous "Call to Action" are now yielding their bitter fruits. "Bishops" are now confronted with a whole new crop of maturing, noxious weeds.<sup>66</sup>

This passage was in an article describing another "questionable" Catholic entry into the political arena—USCC membership in an adjunct coalition for the White House Conference on the Family (WHCF). The Bishops later withdrew from this organization "because of the procedures the coalition used in promoting the votes" and because the bishops "had received strong criticism for . . . membership in the coalition because some of its members include[d] Planned Parenthood, the National Gay Task Force, and Zero Population Growth."<sup>67</sup> The "bitter fruit" and "noxious weed" metaphors are important rhetorically.

The upshot of this particular USCC connection was that it was just one of a series of questionable alliances presented by *The Wanderer* as dramatic "proof" of intrigue by Church "bureaucrats." No mention of or attempt to discriminate between the various missions, goals, and aims of these respective groups was offered. Mere association was "evidence" of folly and concerted attempts to subvert Holy Mother Church.

*The Wanderer* also complained about the Bishops and their advisers who represented family issues at the World Synod of Bishops in 1980. One adviser, David Thomas, a theology professor at St. Meinrad's College in Indiana, was also a participant and featured speaker at the White House Conference on the Family. In addition, *The Wanderer* charged that Thomas was also a consultant on sex education for Benziger Publishing, whose "Family Life" program "was recently evaluated and found wanting by the Washington Archdiocese."<sup>68</sup>

Suspicion was also raised about another of the Bishops' advisers slated to attend the Synod. Mrs. Delores Leckey was charged with being "a mother employed outside of the home" who had "a living husband . . . employed by the Federal government." The conclusion drawn from such evidence: "Mrs. Leckey appears to exhibit a bias against the traditional role of the mother as the heart of the home. There is no argument she could make on behalf of the traditional family, were she so inclined, that would not be outweighed by her example."<sup>69</sup>

Attack by innuendo was also used against "liberal" bishops slated to attend the Synod as well. Note the conspiratorial tone:

Now the fact is, the four Prelates named above [Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, Archbishop Joseph L. Bernadin of Cincinnati, Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez of Santa Fe, and Auxiliary Bishop J. Francis Stafford of Baltimore] were not simultaneously visited with the inspiration to take Mrs. Leckey and Thomas to the Synod. The two were selected in some quarter because of their views, because of the coloration they will lend to the proceedings. [Moreover, it is charg-



ed that] by suppressing the voices of the sizable number of Catholics who would be aghast at the views of these two [Leckey and Thomas], the U.S. delegates are doing a disservice to the Church . . . Ordinary people [are] begin[ning] to perceive . . . stacked deck.<sup>70</sup>

By working through the various connections between liberal bishops, seemingly hand-picked advisers, and other mysteriously nefarious events in the implied network of intrigue, *The Wanderer* is able to dramatically establish the conspiratorial tone of the discourse. The idea that things are being hatched in "some quarter" by these church bureaucrats gives audiences reason to believe in "actual conspiracies" also "documented" in *The Wanderer* rhetoric.

### *The Scenic Environment: "Actual" Conspiracies*

Three "actual" conspiracies were cited in the July through December 1980 issues of *The Wanderer*. In an article entitled "the Conspiracy to Stamp Out Latin in the Mass," Joseph T. Gill indicated that this liturgical change "amount[ed] to a conspiracy, which is not limited to low rung bureaucrats but extends into the ranks of the hierarchy." Moreover, the article complains that the faithful are being duped by "professional liturgists who are permitted by their bishops to lie, not only about the so-called 'spirit' of Vatican II but about the actual words appearing in its documents, in order to wipe out Latin from the Mass." Allowing these "vandals" such a "strangle-hold" is termed a "crime."<sup>71</sup> Here the mere accusation of conspiracy presumably carries enough credibility that "true believers" are convinced of the existence of such a plot. Furthermore, since the "bureaucrats" are in the habit of lying about the documents of Vatican II, their subversion is potentially unlimited, extending to other "core" issues regarding the family and the spiritual life of the faithful. Another article "documents" a linkage between a seminary sexuality and a pornography shop.<sup>72</sup> Again, such a "linkage" poses a threat to family values.

The third article deserves more explanation because it underscores the elaborate machinations the authors employ to "verify" the existence of a conspiracy. The story centered on an organization known as the Parish Renewal Institute (PRI) which, we are told, "formerly" conducted business as the Internal Corporate Renewal Institute. *The Wanderer* often repeated the former name—seemingly to reinforce the organization's mysterious nature.

PRI "emerged from the closet" to organize a "parish leadership conference." In reality, however, this purpose was "not fully descriptive of what was afoot on the inside." What was happening inside, reader's were told, "was nothing less than another step in the ongoing twentieth century Reformation, the drive to establish a counterfeit, or American, Catholic Church within the Roman Catholic Church but not in union with the Holy See."<sup>73</sup>

The article claimed organizers sought to "mobilize human resources" at St. Barnabas Church, South Side Chicago and to "harness these powerful resources to do the work it had in mind." *The Wanderer* argued that this organization would be chiefly concerned with "improving the temporal life of its members" while ignoring their "spiritual life." Part of the seminar held at St. Barnabas was described as giving "(perhaps deliberately) a distorted picture of the problems of the American priesthood" because it centered on priesthood and stress.<sup>74</sup> The article gives an elaborate account of how and when the Parish Renewal Institute was incorporated, its chief officers, its aims, and lengthy quotations from its articles of incorporation to substantiate a subversive tone. PRI was charged with establishing an unorthodox "new vision or ecclesiology."<sup>75</sup>

Moreover, significant collusion is noted on the part of primary players and groups.

For example, PRI received funding from the American Board of Catholic Missions, a standing committee of the USCC. Social activist priest Msgr. John Egan is portrayed as the "guiding light" behind PRI.<sup>76</sup> *The Wanderer* concluded that members of PRI "would mistake their rebellious desires for discernment." Finally, it warned, "One or two men present and others not present knew what happened, even if the participants did not, and it was likely they toasted their victory and were already making preparations to move on the next victim."<sup>77</sup> Again, one finds images of an elite cabal manipulating history from "behind the scenes" in callous disregard for the spiritual life of the people.

### *Generic Warrants and Rhetorical Vision*

The rhetorical vision evoked in *The Wanderer* is given increased salience by making synonymous a variety of disparate terms, issues, concepts, and/or philosophies.<sup>78</sup> Certain key terms form categorical sets for people to pigeon-hole information. These categories, once evoked, become interchangeable. For example, a likely equation drawn from this narrative might read like this: "Communism = Secular Humanism = Pluralism," etc. The more these key terms and concepts are repeated, the more they serve as "warrants" for the presence of the others. Evidence and claim are "authorized" or "bridged" by explicit and implied characterizations.<sup>79</sup> Such warrants provide key condensation symbols which help the audience resonate with the discourse.<sup>80</sup>

The repetition of articles, advertisements, and their particular juxtapositions on the page reify this rhetorical task. This process may be termed "generic warranting" or the use of "generic warrants." The term "generic" simply means a typology or category.<sup>81</sup> The term "warrant" is used here in the Toulminian sense of a bridge between the claims and the evidence. Thus, certain key terms and concepts serve as "categorical bridges" between the claims and evidence found in the narratives. These "categorical bridges" can be utilized by audiences in a variety of places within the newspaper. Generic warrants may be found within particular sentences, paragraphs, articles, and advertisements. As employed, they seemingly have magical transformative power.

*The Wanderer's* significant generic warrants are formulated around one central condensation symbol—"The Family":

Americans are strongly warned that historically a breakdown of the family has always preceded the downfall of nations. [At the present time], the family is under . . . terrible attack, with even religious leaders being duped into recognition of immoral liaisons as 'families.'<sup>82</sup>

[Moreover, it is argued:] Individuals without family strength either disintegrate into perversions, or endlessly seek a crutch from the state. If this happens in sufficient numbers that basis for an authoritarian government is established. This can be hastened by the usurpation of natural rights and responsibilities of the family by the state, and other elitist and vested interest groups.<sup>83</sup>

If the family is under attack, then the nation is at risk. Either perversion or pernicious government regulation will result. In *The Wanderer's* view, if either happens (and each signifies the other), establishing an authoritarian government will be very easy. The "state" and other "elitist" and "vested interest groups" are argued as working toward this goal. Any elements that can be identified as subverting the family and its traditional values will "naturally" serve as generic warranting devices to "bridge" a particular claim or reinforce a certain piece of evidence. Thus a host of villains, issues, and/or philosophies can serve as generic warrants.



In one narrative, the ERA, and Women and the Draft are linked to the family. In another, Communism, Atheism, and Satanism become warrants for accepting specific arguments on education. Each is a "sign" of the other. Each is a "bridge" linking the other with the goal of drawing specific conclusions. The following examples illustrate these points:

[On the ERA, and Women and the Draft]:

Congress in the past has exempted girls from the draft because of the underlying concern for the family as the basis of our entire society. Wives and mothers have traditionally stood at the center of family life. They provide the strength, stability, and permanence so absolutely essential to natural survival whether in peace or war. Even on purely natural grounds the country is best served by exempting women from the draft. If we take into account our Judeo-Christian teachings on the sacredness and high dignity of family life, the argument grows even more persuasive.<sup>84</sup>

[On Communism, Atheism, Satanism]:

Many leaders in non-Communist areas have been godless, explicitly or implicitly. Many schools, if not openly atheistic, are so godless by implication in what they teach, that they are by implication teaching godlessness . . . What brings out the problem in Russia more clearly is not by describing their Communism as Atheistic, but as Satanic. They are not merely teaching their own people to turn away from God; they are preventing them from turning toward Him when they want to do so.<sup>85</sup>

The family is a repository for traditional values and requires traditional institutional support systems. Communism is atheistic and therefore Satanic. If it is Satanic, one has a moral obligation to combat it. This also provides the rationale for increased militarism and the vigorous offense of "those clergymen who publicly call for 'larger defense spending in the face of Soviet aggression.'" For the 'greatest immorality' . . . is to stand by and do nothing while the Marxists take over the world."<sup>86</sup> Ultimately, this too affects the family.

An interesting domino effect is accomplished by generic warranting. It helps audiences link articles together and aids them in sharing a univocal rhetorical vision. One may link apocalypticism, abortion, liberals, social activists, Marxists, the failure to heed "Humane Vitae," and modernists to the collapse of marriage and family life, and by implication, to the destruction of civilization or "our way of life":

If one reads the Gospel itself, it is impossible to ignore the apocalyptic character of Christ's attitude. He makes everything in life subordinate to God's final judgment and the divine reversal of the values of this world. Neither the liberal interpretation of the Gospel, nor the social activist one, often inspired by Marxism, is based upon the Gospel itself...[and, therefore, it is] not genuinely concerned with Jesus and his teaching, but . . . with the things of this world.<sup>87</sup>

Traditional family values are God's values. The war over values is a war between good and evil. This war is carried out on a host of battlefields. The linkage of "liberals," "social

activists," and "Marxists" as under God's judgment becomes a generic warranting device that serves as a bridge that simultaneously transfers to a host of family "issues" and problems found in other articles. For example, in another story doubt is raised about the abortion issue in the same apocalyptic tone:

One wonders how long God will withhold his anger from a nation which in a couple of days will mark the anniversary of the infamous Jan. 22nd decision of a Supreme Court in 1973 which allowed abortion and thus legalized murder . . . This is only one national moral failure—there are others. To have a blessed nation we need have a nation bowed in humble obedience to God's will.<sup>88</sup>

God's judgment looms over this particular decision because God presides over an objective, absolute, moral order. God will withhold his "blessing" if that order is not preserved. Abortion is a "sin" against God's order and, by implication, a significant "breach" in family relations.

Another instance where God's order has been contravened is in Catholic family relations affected by the Roman Pontiff's encyclical "Humane Vitae." In constructing a rhetorical vision, the dispute over contraception becomes a touchstone for "a summary of some of the key arguments which Modernist theologians use in order to justify changing the doctrines and the moral teachings of the Catholic Church."<sup>89</sup>

This passage refers to a statement by Archbishop Joseph Quinn on the family and *The Wanderer* interprets it for its readers solely in terms of its import for those who would defy the Pope on the issue of artificial contraception (and, by implication, defy all authority). This issue is also extended and transferred to a host of other issues and problems (including abortion), each of which serve as generic warrants for one another; all in the "service" of subverting the ultimate condensation symbol, that of family:

If "Humane Vitae" means what it says then all the good subjective dispositions on the part of dissenters are not going to change the facts of the objective moral order, nor make what the dissenters are doing any less a disaster to the conditions of marriage and family life in the modern world. The results of that disaster we have seen in striking fashion in the sexual morality of the world outside the Catholic Church, since contraception became popular with non-Catholics in the first third of this century. And we have seen the effects of that disaster inside the Church ever since the revolt against "Humane Vitae" which took place in 1968. The CTSA [Catholic Theological Society of America] *Human Sexuality Report*, and the weakness of practically all dissenters on the abortion issue, are signs of the collapse which has occurred.<sup>90</sup>

Here, internal and external issues and events verify one another—generically warranting each other in the presentation of the discursive series, which in turn helps to shape the rhetorical vision. This "brand" of discourse helps shape the beliefs and values of a specialized audience—"conspiracy-prone," "true believers" who are given over to paranoid stylizations. Generic warrants increase saliency because they enable their auditors to draw from a host of repetitive terms, issues, and thematic contents, both within implicit and explicit arguments and from their juxtaposition in the overall text of the newspaper. This latter point, juxtaposition, will serve as a final example of the over-arching rhetorical vision accomplished through the generic warranting process.

Repetition and juxtaposition are key defining characteristics of the generic warranting



process and, by extension, conspiracy discourse in *The Wanderer*. The use of the generic warrant in the solidification of the rhetorical vision can be found in evidence drawn from the juxtaposition of headlines as well as from analysis of a "typical" page of advertising. A typical page of headlines seems to tap rather disparate issues:

"Concerning Gay Rights"

"Sinners, Saints and Sufferers"

"Bishop Says True Catholics Don't Oppose Church Teachings"

"Our Military Manpower Crisis"<sup>91</sup>

Each of these headlines can be incorporated into the overall rhetorical vision if one views them as generic warrants—categorical bridges to the ultimate symbolic condensation symbol of "the family." Each referent is converted to a "family issue"; it is charged by the heated, exaggerated, conspiratorial fantasy world assembled by those caught up in the creation and dissemination of a host of threatening images and dramas.

Interestingly, this is also highlighted when one analyzes a typical page of advertisements. Because the rhetorical vision assembled in the articles is full of condensation symbols that create arousal, the advertisements seem to be structured to relieve such tension by offering to restore quiescence through some kind of "action." On a typical page one finds the following: "Do You Favor a Strong U.S. Posture Against Communism? You Can Learn to Make It Happen in the Politics Program at Christendom College." This ad offers "internships" with political action committee members and congresspersons and promises readers that they will receive "first-hand" political experience.

Another advertisement on the same page focuses on "attacking" Communism through prayer: At Fatima in 1917, Our Blessed Mother said "If you will do what I tell you, Russia will be converted and many souls will be saved; if not, Russia will spread her errors throughout the world, nations will be annihilated." This advertisement promises: "Russia will be converted when there is a Blue Army member for each Communist." This rather paranoid pronouncement is enhanced by another advertisement for "survivalist foods." The headline reads: "Emergency Food Reserves—Real Insurance You Can Eat." Here one is provided "insurance" against disaster both physically and spiritually. Just as survivalist food will ensure one against the ravages of a holocaust, so too the veiled reference to the eucharistic banquet will also provide spiritual "insurance."

Other advertisements reinforce the need for escape from both physical and spiritual tensions. One might escape the horrors of the modern world by (1) becoming a nun and teaching at an elementary school with an "orthodox religious curriculum," (2) joining a traditional order of sisters or brothers," (3) binding one's prayerbook or office at the Bookworm and Silverfish Bookstore, and/or (4) taking an actual escape route—a trip booked through Chero Tours Travel Agency.<sup>92</sup> Thus, the tension in the articles is relieved through the quiescent "escape" mechanisms offered in the advertisements.

## IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Rabb have posited three general requirements for any political movement: social strain, the isolation of a specific cause for that strain, and the advancement of a specific solution. These movements may occur when (1) low but stabilized expectations are disrupted; (2) depressed expectations are rising; and (3) elites see themselves as threatened. This may happen simultaneously or separately.<sup>93</sup> Conspiracy theories can provide the ideological bridge between elite and non-elite groups and thus provide the "glue" for entire movements. *The Wanderer* is an exemplar of what Lipset and Raab term "backlash movements." Backlash movements include social strain, ideological projection, and backlash targetry. Social strain is created by real or threaten-

ed deprivation in status and/or power. Ideological projection is the ability of participants to "project" social strain in terms other than those of "pragmatic reality." The "public ground" for preservation of power and status is a moralistic one. The ideological explanation restructures an ambiguous, inexplicable situation by explaining it in a plausible, unifying, and coherent way to its audiences. Ideological projection thus becomes a status/power "substitution" by stating what must be preferred. Backlash targetry establishes the "enemy"—those from whom the "right" ideology must be preserved. Here one identifies and diagnoses the wise social forces and particular agents responsible for the real or perceived strain. A single target is often preferable so that the movement can gather momentum and increase cohesion.<sup>94</sup>

Such a socio-political explanation seems to account for *The Wanderer's* discourse. The appeals seem based on a perceived loss of power and status within the Church in the post-Vatican II age. The public ground for the "preservation" of such power and status results in a "moralistic" discourse. A variety of doctrinal, liturgical, biblical, social, and ideological strains enacted in the discourse seems to lend credence to a Backlash Targetry movement interpretation of *The Wanderer's* social role or function in the modern church. As has been demonstrated, much of the social and ideological strain was enacted through the evocation of the symbolic condensation symbol of the "family."

The wider theo-political implications are less clear and tentative, at best. Right-wing theo-political conspiratorial discourse seems likely to construct elaborate plots, with myriad linkages, drawn in voluminous detail, tracking an endless array of associations in an effort to unmask and, finally, incriminate "plotters" whose designs are as intricate as they are ill-advised. It is this tendency to provide an incredible array of conspiratorial "evidence" that may be the distinguishing mark of right-wing conspiratorial discourse. The generic warranting process documented here helps to account for this phenomenon. The complex webs of intrigue spun out in such detail for *The Wanderer* when coupled with political action is potentially more serious. Exactly how much influence this extremist fringe will have on the wider theo-political scene remains in doubt. While the 1980 election seemed to presage a turn to the "right," recent events like the disbanding of the Moral Majority signal decreased influence. Minimally, discourse drawn from *The Wanderer* has been a factor in "muddying the waters" within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church and has vocalized its complaints vociferously to Rome.

This essay has outlined the evolution, nature, situational constraints and implications of theologically-inspired right-wing conspiratorial discourse in the U.S. Catholic Church through an intensive analysis of *The Wanderer*. In identifying the common scenarios, heroes and villains and scenes of "implied" and "actual" conspiracies, this paper has demonstrated rhetorical verification of conspiracy operations though the process of generic warranting. Such a process is revealed in the juxtaposition of terms, issues, concepts, philosophies, arguments, and the positioning of headlines and advertisements. The overall rhetorical vision is given increased salience by the unique "paranoid style" of its audiences. *The Wanderer* can be seen as an example of a "backlash targetry" movement within the U.S. Roman Catholic Church and its discourse has wider implications for both Church and society.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Dunn, "Theology and American Public Policy," *Humanities in Society*, 6 (1983), 53.

<sup>2</sup> Dunn, 64.



<sup>3</sup> Kurt W. Ritter, "Confrontation as Moral Drama: The Boston Massacre in Rhetorical Perspective," *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, 62 (Winter 1977), 115.

<sup>4</sup> Dan Nimmo and James E. Coombs, *Mediated Political Realities* (New York and London: Longman, 1983), 195.

<sup>5</sup> Ernest G. Bormann, "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58 (1972), 400-401. Bormann defines a rhetorical vision as a "unified putting together of . . . various shared fantasies." See Ernest G. Bormann, "Symbolic Convergence Theory: A Communication Formulation" *Journal of Communication*, 35 (1985), 114. A rhetorical vision is made up of a composite image of various fantasies symbolically constructed through settings, characters, actions, and plotlines.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 1966, 3-5; 24-26; 29; 38.

<sup>7</sup> Donovan J. Ochs, "Social Movements: A Place for Conspiracy," unpublished paper presented at the annual convention of the Speech Communication Association, 1972.

<sup>8</sup> Barnet Baskerville, "The Cross and the Flag: Evangelists of the Far Right," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 27 (1963), 199.

<sup>9</sup> Richard O. Curry and Thomas M. Brown (eds.), *Conspiracy: The Fear of the Subversion in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1972), 254-255.

<sup>10</sup> Chris R. Kasch, "Reaffirmation and Subversion: Conspiracy in American Life," unpublished paper presented at the annual convention of the Central States Speech Association, 1981.

<sup>11</sup> David Brian Davis (Ed.), *The Fear of Conspiracy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 109-110.

<sup>12</sup> Kasch; Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing Extremism in America, 1790-1977*, Second Edition. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), 23.

<sup>13</sup> Curry and Brown, 102; Davis, xvii-xviii.

<sup>14</sup> Hofstadter, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Davis, 68.

<sup>16</sup> Curry and Brown, 103.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, 206; Hans Toch, *The Social Psychology of Social Movements* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 51-54; 69-70.

<sup>18</sup> Curry and Brown, 33.

<sup>19</sup> Ochs; Lipset and Raab, 15; Hofstadter, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Curry and Brown, 74, 78; Davis, xviii-xx; Toch, 51-55; 45-50.

<sup>21</sup> Kasch; John F. Cragan, "Rhetorical Strategy: A Dramatistic Interpretation and Application," *Central States Speech Journal*, 26 (1975), 4-11.

<sup>22</sup> Hofstadter; Lipset and Raab; and John C. Raines (Ed.), *Conspiracy: The Implications of the Harrisburg Trial for the Democratic Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

<sup>23</sup> Raines, 154.

<sup>24</sup> Kasch; Davis; Raines; Lipset and Raab.

<sup>25</sup> Kasch; Hofstadter.

<sup>26</sup> Hofstadter.

<sup>27</sup> Curry and Brown; Hofstadter, Toch; Orville J. Victor, *History of American Conspiracies* (New York: Arno Press, 1969); Fred L. Casmir, "The Hitler I Heard," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 49 (1963), 8-16.

<sup>28</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns, C.S.P., "An Orthodox Counter Attack," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns, C.S.P., "Matters Great and Small," *The Wanderer*, 31 January 1980, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Fr. Burns, "Matters Great and Small," p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>31</sup> "Hitchcock Warns of Christo-Pagan Theology," *The Wanderer*, 7 February 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-5; p. 6, cols. 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> Edith Myers, Review. Renee Casin, *St. Thomas Aquinas, Orthodoxy, and Neo-Modernism in the Church*, (Catholics United for the Faith, 1977), *The Wanderer*, 7 February 1980, p. 9, col. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Donald A. Doyle, "John Paul II on Catechesis in our Time," *The Wanderer*, 7 February 1980, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Phillip Trower, "Background to Ecumenism," *The Wanderer*, 21 February 1980, p. 1, col. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "Education Must Form Good Character," *The Wanderer*, 29 May 1980, p. 8, col. 4.

<sup>36</sup> To conserve space, citations in endnotes 36-42 draw from samples from the month of January 1980 as exemplars of issues covered throughout the year. See e.g., "Major Political Battles Over Family Issues Likely in the 1980's," *The Wanderer*, 2 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 1-2; Fr. Robert E. Burns, "Destroyers of the Family," *The Wanderer*, 10 January 1980, p. 2, cols. 1-2; "Passage of Domestic Violence Bill Would Endanger the Family," *The Wanderer*, 10 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 1-2.

<sup>37</sup> Abortion is a key family issue and is reflected in an overwhelming number of articles. The bulk of the articles on abortion are front page news. See e.g., "Pro-Life Conference Shows Christians Turning Political," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 2-4; "Pro-Life Activists Critique Bishops on Abortion Position," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 6-7; p. 5, cols. 4-5; Fr. Paul Trinchard, "More Abundant Life," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 2, cols. 4-7; Peggy Moen, "Pro-lifers Resolve to Continue Battle for Life," *The Wanderer*, 31 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-7; p. 8, cols. 4-5; "Respect Life Symposium at L.U. Examines Evils of Abortion," *The Wanderer*, p. 1, cols. 1-2; p. 5, cols. 4-5.

<sup>38</sup> Educational themes include the quality of orthodoxy of religious education in Catholic schools and seminaries, anti-sex education in both parochial and public schools and the teaching of evolution versus creationism with the latter held in a favorable light. See e.g., Fr. William C. Van Breda, O.S.B., "The Poisoned Well," *The Wanderer*, 10 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-7; p. 7, cols. 1-7; Donald A. Doyle, "Title IX: Federal Control Without Federal Aid," *The Wanderer*, 10 January 1980, p. 3, cols. 5-7; Fr. Robert E. Burns C.S.P., "Self-Evident Truths," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 2, cols. 1-2; Joseph T. Gill, "Raising the Ante on Betrayal," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 4, col. 4.

<sup>39</sup> See "Presidential Candidates Seeking Homosexual Support," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 1-3.



<sup>40</sup> Communism, Marxism, and Socialism are used conterminously. See "Nicaraguan Bishops Endorse Democratic Socialism" *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 2, cols. 4-6; "Doctrinaire Socialism Has No Place in True Catholic Thought," *The Wanderer*, 10 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2; Paul Scott, "Linking Cuba and Afghanistan," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 1-3; John T. Metzler, "Congress to Pay Bills for Nicaragua's Marxist Junta," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 5, cols. 5-7; Robert E. Bauman (Rep. MD), "Afghanistan Invasion: The Waking of a President," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 6, cols. 5-7.

<sup>41</sup> See Mary E. Cook, "Ethical Religion," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 7, cols. 1-7.

<sup>42</sup> See e.g., A.J. Matt, Jr., "Bishops Must Confront Dissident Supporters of Kueng," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2; John S. Mulloy, "The Committee on Doctrine and the Anti-Magisterial Theologians," *The Wanderer*, 10 Jan. 1980, p. 4, cols. 3-5; John Young, "Transubstantiation and the Real Presence," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-7, and p. 7, cols. 1-4; "The Doctrinal Image of Fr. Raymond Brown," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2; A. J. Matt, Jr., "Tampering with the Sacred Mysteries," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 3-5; Dr. Marvin Panski, "Karl Rahner's Tempest In a Teapot," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-4; Fr. Valentine Long, O.F.M., "The Church Not the Biblicists Must Have the Final Word," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-7; p. 7, cols. 1-3; "Jesuit Editor Explains Why Women Cannot be Priests," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-6; p. 6, cols. 3-4; "Jesuit Journal Reaffirms Right of Catholics to 'Certainty of Faith,'" *The Wanderer*, 31 January 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-6; A.J. Matt, Jr., "The Two Faces of Bishop Sklba," *The Wanderer*, 31 January 1980, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns, C.S.P., "Issues and the Future," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 2, col. 1.

<sup>44</sup> Charles R. Rice, "One Issue Politics," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 4.

<sup>45</sup> A.S. Matt, Sr., "Bishops Must Confront Dissident Supporters of Kueng," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2.

<sup>46</sup> Mary E. Cook, "Ethical Religion," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p. 7, cols. 2-7.

<sup>47</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns C.S.P. "An Orthodox Counter-Attack," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 2, col. 2.

<sup>48</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "Depriving Catholics of the Truth is a Much Ignored Justice Issue," *The Wanderer*, 14 February 1980, p. 4, col. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Donald A. Doyle, "John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time," *The Wanderer*, 14 February 1980, p. 7, col. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Antoinette Horr, "Drive for Female Ordination by Catholic Radicals Creates Feeling of DejaVu," *The Wanderer*, 6 March 1980, p. 7, col. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Frank Morriss, "The Subversives Never Seem to Give Up," *The Wanderer*, 6 November 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-5.

<sup>52</sup> "Vatican Prohibition on Priests in Politics Will Include Other Religions," *The Wanderer*, 11 December 1980, p. 1, cols. 1-2; p. 7, cols. 4-5.

<sup>53</sup> John T. Mulloy, "WHCF Social Planners and the American Family," *The Wanderer*, 10 July 1980.

<sup>54</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns, C.S.P. "May Day! May Day! May Day!," *The Wanderer*, 29 May 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2.

<sup>55</sup> The first instance had to do with a "conspiracy" against conservative Bishop John J. Sullivan of New Orleans as "perpetrated" by the Priests' Senate in his diocese. This Senate was said to include a number of the bishops' "enemies" who were working to get him to resign. The Jesuits were deemed responsible because a Jesuit priest was called in to conduct an investigation and subsequently recommended that Sullivan resign because of mismanagement. Those priests involved were labeled as "conspirators," who were trying to depose a "brave and loyal Catholic." See Frank Morris, "Another Shameless Maneuver Against the Bishop," *The Wanderer*, 28 February 1980, p. 4, cols. 1-2. The word "conspiracy" was used a second time in an article describing the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation's day-long seminar entitled "Communism and the Present Danger: The Battle of the Faith, the Country and the Family." The article complained of a "conspiracy of silence" on the part of the elites regarding Communism and subversion in U.S. society. See Joseph T. Gill, "Effects of Communism, Humanism on Catholics in the U.S. Examined," *The Wanderer*, 13 March 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-7, p. 7, cols. 1-4. Interestingly, these two instances foreshadow the kinds of linkages termed "generic warrants" in the next section of this paper. The conspirators are linked to the Jesuits and an elite Priests' Senate in the first case, and in the latter, Humanism, Communism, and the press are tainted with guilt-by-association.

<sup>56</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "Depriving Catholics of the Truth," *The Wanderer*, p. 4, col. 3 (italics added).

<sup>57</sup> Donald A. Doyle, "John Paul II on Catechesis in Our Time," *The Wanderer*, p. 7, col. 1 (italics added).

<sup>58</sup> Edward Drinkhard, "A Look at the Fundamentalist Evangelical Press," *The Wanderer*, 14 February 1980, p. 7, col. 3 (italics added).

<sup>59</sup> Richard Belleville, "The Diversity and Strength of the American Family," *The Wanderer*, 1 May 1980, p. 4, col. 2 (italics added).

<sup>60</sup> Fr. Robert E. Burns, C.S.P. "Issues and the Future," *The Wanderer*, 3 January 1980, p.2, col. 2.

<sup>61</sup> Stanley Interrante, "Orange Diocese Laity Protest Fr. Brown Appearance," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 1, col.7.

<sup>62</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "Raising the Ante on Betrayal," *The Wanderer*, 24 January 1980, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Gary Potter, "Church Agencies Make Common Cause With Abortion Mongers," *The Wanderer*, 12 June 1980, p. 1, cols. 6-7.

<sup>64</sup> A.J. Matt, Jr., "An Unholy Alliance," *The Wanderer*, 12 June 1980, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>65</sup> One might as easily cite the issuance of Pope Paul the VI's encyclical *Humane Vitae*, which condemned artificial contraception. Papal and ecclesiastical statements become the "real events" that lead to heavy dispute, heated controversy, and in the case of *The Wanderer*, conspiratorial fantasy. The past is continually dredged up as a rationale for present intrigues. This will be demonstrated in what follows.

<sup>66</sup> A.J. Matt, Jr., "The Embarrassment Could Have Been Avoided," *The Wanderer*, 3 July 1980, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>67</sup> "Catholic Agencies Withdraw from Coalition for WHCF," *The Wanderer*, 3 July 1980, p. 1, col. 6.

<sup>68</sup> "Doubts the Quality of Bishops' Advisors for Synod," *The Wanderer*, 1 May 1980, p. 9, col. 1.

<sup>69</sup> "Doubts the Quality of Bishops' Advisors," p. 4, cols. 2-3.

<sup>70</sup> "Doubts the Quality of Bishops' Advisors," p. 4, cols. 3-4.



<sup>71</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "The Conspiracy to Stamp Out the Latin Mass," *The Wanderer*, 21 August 1980, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>72</sup> "USCL Reveals Link Between Seminary 'Sexuality' Seminar and Porno Center," *The Wanderer*, 11 December 1980, p. 1, cols. 3-6; p. 7, cols. 3-5.

<sup>73</sup> Joseph T. Gill, "Architects of an American Church Meet in Chicago," *The Wanderer*, 11 December 1980, p. 1, col. 1 (hereafter cited as Gill, "Architects").

<sup>74</sup> Gill, "Architects," p. 1, col. 2 (parentheses in original).

<sup>75</sup> Gill, "Architects," p. 1, col. 4.

<sup>76</sup> Gill, "Architects," p. 9, col. 1.

<sup>77</sup> Gill, "Architects," p. 9, col. 3.

<sup>78</sup> See endnote 5. An examination of the titles of the articles presented throughout the year is informative. Terms that evoke conspiracy and threat pervade the titles: See, e.g., "Liberals Assail Christian Conservatives," CMF Forum Hits . . . Threat of Communism," "The Subversives: Never Seem to Give Up," "Further Liturgical Tampering by the NCCB," "Dissenters Seem to Challenge the Efficacy of Grace," "Destroyers of the Family," "The Poisoned Well," "A Power Play that Failed," "Anti-Life Establishment Has Vast, Interconnected Network," "Scheme to Turn Planned Parenthood Political," "Raising the Ante on Betrayal," and "The Media's Big Lie." Issues are also linked to each other and to hated groups or enemies: "Linking Cuba and Afghanistan," "Presidential Candidates seeking Homosexual Support," "Reagan Encloses Helms-Dolan HLF Amendment," "The Bishop and ERA," "Drive for Female Ordination by Catholic Radicals," "Archbishop May Opposes Sit-Ins at Abortion Clinic," "Drafting Women: ERA's Impossible Dilemma," "Catholics, ERA, and Abortion," "Homosexuals: From Issue Framing to Political Power," "K.C. Delegates Condemn Abortion: Pornography—Stress Family Values," "War and Prayer," "Marxism, Death Penalty, on Bishop's Agenda." Orthodox concepts and/or philosophies are endorsed in: "Fundamental Values," "The Authenticated Path to Heaven," "Jesuit Journal Reaffirming Right of Catholics to Centralized Faith," "Self-Evident Truths," "Holy Father Says Marital Life Must Conform to Church's Teaching," "Challenges the Infallibility of the Magisterium," "Vatican Affirms Infant Baptism Tradition," "Praise for the Baltimore Catechism." Some of the article seem to be written under pen names, possibly by the same few people. Names like Edward Drinkhard, Antoinette Horr, and Invicta seem like they are "designed" to "subconsciously" give one threatening feelings. Even a "renegade" or a "whore" or someone who drinks heavily or who has been "convicted" testifies against the perpetrators of these "crimes." What might these names imply to audiences constructing the "gestalt" of the over-arching rhetorical vision?

<sup>79</sup> Thus a warrant helps auditors make "sense" of or detect the reasoning used in making the connection between the claims advanced and the evidence offered to support the claims. See Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

<sup>80</sup> "Condensation symbols" evoke feelings of quiescence or arousal as affective responses by mass publics. If the family is threatened, of course, arousal is quite predictable. See Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, (Urbana, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 6-7.

<sup>81</sup> I do not wish to invoke all the "baggage" involved with the term "genre" or "genre studies." For a seminal discussion see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, (Eds.) *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action* (Falls Church, Virginia: Speech Communication Association, 1978).

<sup>82</sup> "Resolutions Adopted by the Sixteenth Annual National Wanderer Forum," *The Wanderer*, 24 July 1980, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>83</sup> Richard Belleville, "The Diversity and Strength of the American Family," *The Wanderer*, 1 May 1980, p. 4, col. 1.

<sup>84</sup> Fr. Robert D. Smith, "Compulsory Godlessness," *The Wanderer*, 1 May 1980, p. 3, cols. 2-3.

<sup>85</sup> Charles L. Pulver, "CMF Forum Hit Growing Threat of Communism," *The Wanderer*, 30 October 1980, p. 8, col. 5.

<sup>86</sup> Pulver, p. 8, col. 3.

<sup>87</sup> John J. Mulloy, "The Apocalypse and the Gospel of Jesus," *The Wanderer*, 25 September 1980, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Fr. Paul Trinchard, "More Abundant Life," *The Wanderer*, 17 January 1980, p. 2, cols. 4-7.

<sup>89</sup> John S. Mulloy, "Why Archbishop Quinn Wants a Change in *Humane Vitae*," *The Wanderer*, 30 October 1980, p. 4, Col. 3. (Referred to hereafter as "Quinn").

<sup>90</sup> Mulloy, p. 4, col. 5.

<sup>91</sup> See *The Wanderer*, 24 June 1980, p. 2, cols. 1-7. See endnote 78 for further corroboration.

<sup>92</sup> See *The Wanderer*, 29 May 1980, p. 7, cols. 1-7.

<sup>93</sup> Lipset and Raab, 23.

<sup>94</sup> Lipset and Raab, 131-132.